

BOOK REVIEWS

HUMAN GROWTH AFTER BIRTH. By David Sinclair. (Pp. x + 212; 68 figures. £2.00). London: Oxford University Press, 1973.

'GROWTH' is a notion, at once commonplace, complicated and impossible to define rigorously, for it covers, or at least touches, such a wide variety of phenomena. Professor Sinclair has taken a broad view: for him growth includes all the *progressive changes* in an organism from fertilization until death—not only changes in size and shape, but in structural complexity, chemical composition and behaviour as well. Maintenance, repair, regeneration, malignancy and senescence are likewise regarded as growth processes. The author points out in his preface that these matters are treated descriptively for the most part, because so little is known of the basic mechanisms, but wherever possible an attempt has been made to give a general idea of the principles involved.

The scope of the book is well illustrated by the chapter headings: nature of growth, growth in height and weight, growth of tissues, growth of systems, indices of maturity, changes in shape and posture, factors influencing growth and maturation, growth and repair, disturbances of growth, and old age.

'Growth' is a subject to whose importance medical men and biologists pay lip service, but rarely bother to study, because the information is buried in so many disparate articles and journals, and is so difficult to evaluate when it is disinterred, particularly when it is couched in forbidding mathematical language. Professor Sinclair has synthesized his material so well and has written so clearly, that the reader could fall into the trap of thinking that growth was a straightforward matter with few problems left to solve—but this is simply a measure of his grasp of the subject, and of his skill in exposition. The book is modestly intended for preclinical medical students and students of human biology, but in fact there can be few professional biologists who would not find something to their advantage in its pages, while for the undergraduate student it is an ideal introduction to a most characteristic and fascinating feature of living organisms. The book is, moreover, clinically orientated throughout, with repeated insights into the problems of human disease and disability. The first edition of "Human Growth after Birth" was a great success, and this new and improved edition should do equally well.

J.P.

AN INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN PHYSIOLOGY. By David F. Horrobin. (Pp. 176. Illustrated. Paper £2.20, Boards £4.50). Lancaster. Medical and Technical Publishing, 1973.

THIS book was designed as an introductory text for medical students and as a complete text for students in ancillary subjects such as physiotherapy. It is an abbreviated form of the author's earlier and larger text for medical students and many of the original figures have been used in the shorter version. The author feels that many medical students are confused by the amount of detail in the larger textbooks of physiology and would benefit by reading first a short book on the subject. I suspect that this is true though I do not know any evidence to support it. It may be that students do not appreciate synopses of a subject until they have struggled for a while with its details.

However, if the thesis is true, this text provides a suitable outline of physiology written in a clear and simple style. It assumes little prior knowledge and complex scientific phenomena are described as far as possible in simple language.

I.C.R.